

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, CB, NEOU NOU

SUBJECT: MADAME NEOU NOU CLAIMS TO BE LON NOL NEGOTIATOR

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF AN AP STORY DATELINED
PHNOM PENH, JUNE 7. APPEARED IN THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE:

BEGIN TEXT -- THE TOP- RANKING WOMAN IN THE CAMBODIAN ARMY,
A MOTHER OF 12, SAYS SHE CONDUCTED SECRET NEGOTIATIONS WITH
THE KHMER ROUGE REBELS FIVE MONTHS AGO AS A SPECIAL ENVOY
OF PRESIDENT LON NOL.

MAJ. NEOU NOU, A FORMER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY AND
ONE- TIME NIGHTCLUB OWNER, SAID LON NOL ACCEPTED THE
DEMANDS OF THE KHMER ROUGE BUT THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND
REJECTED THEM SO HER MISSION FAILED.

BUT THE 48- YEAR- OLD ARMY OFFICER SAID SHE IS " VERY
HOPEFUL" THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT HEADED BY PREMIER IN TAM
WILL BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE SUCCESSFULLY AN END TO THE THREE-
YEAR- OLD CAMBODIAN WAR.

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" I THINK IF THE AMERICANS STOP BOMBING IT WILL BE BETTER BECAUSE THEY NEVER HIT COMMUNIST TARGETS AT ALL," SHE SAID. " THEY HIT ONLY POPULATED AREAS. MANY PEOPLE SUFFER FROM THE BOMBS, AND THEY CLAIM THE GOVERNMENT IS KILLING THEM. IF THEY CONTINUE THE BOMBING, I THINK THE

COMMUNISTS MAY WIN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR."

MRS. NOU SAID SHE CONDUCTED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KHMER ROUGE AT SIEM REAP NEAR THE FABLED TEMPLE OF ANGKOR WAT, IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE, IN HER HOME PROVINCE OF PURSAT ON THE ROAD TO BATTAMBANG AND ON THE EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG RIVER NEAR PHNOM PENH.

SHE SAID SHE HAD BEEN ORDERED BY LON NOL TO SETTLE THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY RANK FOR THE KHMER ROUGE -- THE RED CAMBODIANS -- AFTER PEACE.

" HE ACCEPTED THE KHMER ROUGE DEMANDS THAT THEY BE GIVEN MILITARY RANK AND BE ALLOWED TO STAY TOGETHER IN A PARTICULAR AREA UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL," SHE ADDED.

" BUT THE HIGH COMMAND REJECTED EVERY PROPOSAL," DEMANDING THAT ANYONE WHO RANKED AS AN OFFICER HAD TO BE TRAINED AND EDUCATED AT THE CAMBODIAN MILITARY ACADEMY AND DECLARING THAT THE KHMER ROUGE MUST BE BROKEN UP, MRS. NOU WENT ON.

" YOU SEE," SHE SAID, " I CAN ASSEMBLE ABOUT 20,000 KHMER ROUGE, BUT THE CONDITIONS SET UP BY THE HIGH COMMAND ARE NOT SUITABLE TO BE ACCEPTED. ... LON NOL SAID AS SOON AS THE KHMER ROUGE COME, HE WOULD PROVIDE RANKS AND THEY COULD STAY WHERE THEY ARE. BUT THE HIGH COMMAND SAID THE RULES ARE VERY TIGHT. IT'S NOT AS EASY AS LON NOL SAID."

WHEN SHE WAS ON HER SECRET PEACE MISSION, MRS. NOU SAID, SHE WORKED CLOSELY WITH PROVINCE OFFICIALS IN ARRANGING MEETINGS WITH " LITTLE LEADERS OF THE KHMER ROUGE." SHE SAID THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO MEET WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VARIOUS LOCAL LEADERS IN FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS " BECAUSE THIS GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER CONSIDERED WHO THE LEADERS OF THE KHMER ROUGE OR KHMER RUMDOS ARE."

THE KHMER RUMDOS IS A REBEL FACTION ALLIED WITH THE KHMER ROUGE.

MRS. NOU, SOON TO BECOME BOTH A COLONEL AND A GRAND-MOTHER, SPENT 1966 TO 1971 AS A DEPUTY FROM PURSAT AND WAS PART OF THE LON NOL- LED GROUP THAT OVERTHREW PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK IN 1970.

ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW ABOUT SIHANOUK' S FUTURE IN

CAMBODIA, SHE SMILED AND SAID: " I THINK SIHANOUK CAN COME BACK AS A NORMAL CITIZEN BUT NOT AS A LEADER." END TEXT

COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED.

OUR RECOLLECTION OF MADAME NEOU NOU IS THAT SHE WAS LONG ON SELF AGGRANDIZEMENT AS A DEPUTY AND ERSTWHILE WOMAN' S ARMY COLONEL AND SHORT ON SUBSTANCE. WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF THE EMBASSY COULD GIVE US AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FOREGOING STORY. RUSH

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